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Turkey, Terror and the Pope

Turks have had a pretty rough time, what with three years of military rule to stamp out Soviet-sponsored terrorism. They just had an election and the generals have gone back to the barracks. But instead of extending a well-done-neighbor welcome, the 21-member Council of Europe on Monday refused to seat a Turkish delegation.

The ostensible complaint has to do with the way the terrorists are supposedly being treated in Turkish jails, but we suspect some low politics by Northern European socialists against Turkey's new and relatively conservative government. Whatever the true reasons, the action is unjustified. Turkey has finally recovered from its late-1970s wracking by terrorism, which at one point had brought 28 political killings a day. The military took over in 1980—to the hosannas of almost all Turks—only when the politicians' will to fight back ran out.

The tale of Turkey's best-known terrorist shows what the country has prevailed against. He is of course Mehmet Ali Agca, the trigger-pulling link in the plot to kill the pope. Overwhelming stacks of evidence point to the East bloc, ultimately the KGB, as his master. Agca has indeed said that when he shot the pope in May 1981, he was working for the KGB through Bulgarian spies in Rome. Judge Ilario Martella has spent two years investigating the case to confirm Agca's story, and his report will be made public next month. A trial of the three Bulgarians Agca has fingered could begin in the spring. These include Ser-

gei Antonov, the "Bulgarian airline employee" who is being held under house arrest while appealing an order to return to jail because of the gravity of the charges against him and the danger of his fleeing the country.

The critical link between Agca and the KGB is Abuzer Ugurlu, a Turkish mafia chief who operates out of Sofia and, according to U.S. intelligence, has been a Bulgarian spy since 1974. He's now in a Turkish prison on weapon- and drug-running charges. A Turkish military indictment against Agca for the 1979 murder of Abdi Ipekci, the editor of Milliyet newspaper, was leaked to the AP in Ankara last week. It reveals that Agca says Ugurlu "instigated" him. Agca told Turkish investigators from his cell in Rome, "Ugurlu gave me three Browning pistols . . . to get rid of Ipekci who had begun a press campaign against the Turkish mafia."

But despite this record, the sophisticates in the Council of Europe gave the big thumbs down to Turkey. It's irrelevant, said the worldly Europol, that martial law was called because of imported terrorism. And the November election of Turgut Ozal as prime minister didn't count because only three parties were allowed to run (despite the fact that 92% of Turks voted and the generals' candidate came in third). The European group now says it may throw Turkey out altogether. Mr. Ozal has reacted to this threat with éclat: He says he'll take Turkey out first if his delegation isn't seated soon. We are beginning to wonder ourselves why anyone would want to belong to a club like that.